

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, ELAB, PINT, NL

SUBJECT: SECOND CHAMBER APPROVES ENABLING ACT

REF: A) THE HAGUE 5507 B) THE HAGUE 5418

1. SUMMARY: AT FIVE IN THE MORNING DECEMBER 21, SECOND CHAMBER APPROVED SPECIAL ENABLING ACT GIVING GOVERNMENT WIDE POWERS TO COPE WITH ENERGY CRISIS. CABINET AGREED TO SOME CHANGES IN ITS ORIGINAL PROPOSAL PROVIDING FOR MORE PARLIAMENTARY INFLUENCE ON MEASURES GOVERNMENT TAKES UNDER ACT. ACT WILL BE DEBATED BY THE FIRST CHAMBER ON JANUARY 8, AND IT IS EXPECTED FIRST CHAMBER WILL ACCEPT IT WITHOUT MAJOR CHANGES. END SUMMARY.
2. SECOND CHAMBER DEBATED GOVERNMENT'S ENABLING ACT (REFTELS) IN MARATHON SESSION DECEMBER 18-21. DURING DEBATE OPPOSITION LIBERALS' PRINCIPAL CHARGE WAS THAT GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED TO PROVE ENERGY SITUATION WAS SO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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CRITICAL THAT DRASTIC NEW POWERS FOR CABINET WERE NECESSARY. OPPOSITION ALSO CONTENTED GOVERNMENT WAS

USING OIL CRISIS TO RAM THROUGH PET SOCIALIST SCHEMES LIKE INCOME REDISTRIBUTION. OPPOSITIONS ARGUMENT WON LITTLE SUPPORT. WHEN FINAL VOTE CAME EVEN CHU, WHICH ORDINARILY VOTES WITH LIBERALS, VOTED WITH GOVERNMENT IN FAVOR OF ACT.

3. DURING DEFENSE OF ENABLING ACT, PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTERS OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS ARGUED THAT ENERGY SITUATION WAS SERIOUS OR POTENTIALLY SERIOUS ENOUGH TO MAKE NECESSARY WIDE VARIETY OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND GOVERNMENT NEEDED ALL THE POWERS IT HAD REQUESTED. ARGUMENT THAT ENABLING ACT WOULD PUT PARLIAMENT OUT OF PICTURE WAS AT FIRST REJECTED BY GOVERNMENT, BUT EVENTUALLY CABINET ACCEPTED CHAMBER PROPOSAL REQUIRING GOVERNMENT TO APPEAR IN PARLIAMENT AND DEFEND ITS SPECIFIC ACTIONS UNDER ENABLING ACT WHENEVER 30 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT REQUEST SUCH MEETING. GOVERNMENT ALSO BOWED TO TRADE UNIONS DEMANDS BY AGREEING TO 30 GUILDER SALARY INCREASE IN JANUARY (NOT APRIL) FOR ALL WORKERS UNDER COLLECTIVE LABOR AGREEMENTS (MOST OF DUTCH UNION MEMBERS). GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO COMPROMISE, HOWEVER, ON LENGTH OF TIME ENABLING ACT TO BE IN EFFECT AND THAT REMAINS ONE YEAR ALTHOUGH THERE WAS STRONG SUPPORT FOR A SIX MONTH TRIAL PERIOD.

4. COMMENT: ENALBING ACT, WHOSE PROVISIONS HAVE BEEN REPORTED REFTELS, IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE PIECES OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION ENACTED BY NETHERLANDS SINCE THE END OF THE WAR. IT IS, HOWEVER, AN EMERGENCY MEASURE AND GOVERNMENT CLAIMS THAT IT IS NOT A SOCIALIST TROJAN HORSE. MOST NOTABLE FEATURE OF DEBATE ON ENABLING ACT WAS STRONG ATTACK MADE ON LIBERAL FLOOR LEADER WIEGEL BY KVP FLOOR LEADER ANDRIESSEN. ANDRIESSEN TERMED WIEGEL'S CHARGES THAT DEN UYL TRYING BACKDOOR APPROACH TO STATE SOCIALISM AS GROUNDLESS AND DIVISIVE. THUS STRUGGLE OVER ENABLING ACT HAS STRENGTHENED SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE COALITION AND FURTHER ESTRANGED THE KVP AND THEIR OLD PARTNERS, THE LIBERALS. FIRST CHAMBER, WHICH REFUSED TO SCHEDULE SPECIAL SESSION SO ENABLING ACT COULD
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BECOME LAW BEFORE FIRST OF THE YEAR WILL DEBATE ACT ON JANUARY 8. DESPITE CONSERVATIVE COMPLEXION IT IS UNLIKELY FIRST CHAMBER WILL MAKE ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THE BILL SINCE THIS MIGHT PRECIPITATE A GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS. GOULD

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